

MRS Western Expansion Meeting

February 20, 2004

AB Tech, Asheville

Counties Present: Watagua, Haywood, Jackson, Yancey, Cherokee, Macon, Cleveland, Union, Polk, Alexander, Henderson, Buncombe, Iredell, Catawba

AFI also present

State Updates (Tony)

- House Committee on Child Abuse & Neglect currently in session.
- Someone from the Division attends every day, 3 MRS counties (Caldwell, Moore, Nash) presented.
- Committee will be making recommendations to General Assembly, includes: privacy concerns, caseload standards, other issues affecting daily life of social workers.
- Division will report back to General Assembly by April 1, 2004. The report has been completed, Duke did the evaluation.
- Recommendations that will go forward based on report include:
 - Will make recommendations about funding and caseloads.
 - Possibility of making a 4th finding of "Services Provided, no longer needed." This will take into account that services were front loaded. (Now can make one of three recommendations: "Services Needed", "Services Recommended", or "Services not Needed".
 - This 4th finding would be good for research and would resolve some issues that came out in training – gives "credit" for work done
 - Would allow counties to get money for preventative services instead of waiting until after a substantiation and opening 215.
 - This means *protective* services are no longer needed, does not imply that all family issues are resolved.
 - Possibly phrase it "Services Provided, Protective Services no longer needed."

- New family service plans coming out at some point – delayed due to Domestic Violence piece. Input from 10 pilot counties is that they are more user and family friendly.

(The decision was made that the Division needed a specific DV policy, so a task force was formed from the Secretary's Office. A work group chosen by the Director's Association wrote policy but after piloting it to supervisors, the decision was made to pull back because it wasn't quite where they wanted yet. Eventually there will be DV training that will include a Division trainer to ensure that it covers the bases for the Division. Believe the current target date for statewide implementation is January 05.)

- Switching Tracks
 - Question arose about whether you could do this or not. The manual says not to do it, and then tells you how to do it.
 - Answer was that you can switch tracks either way (as long as it is neglect), but both switches require supervisor approval. Not a common practice.
 - Any cases opened as Investigative before you got training cannot be switched to assessment just because you received training.

Structured Intake - discussed as group since everyone should be doing it by now

- Workers still complain about the amount of time and number of questions that have to ask. (This comment was made by Watagua who rotates workers for coverage.)
- Cleveland Co. says that they have 2 experienced workers that have acclimated and do a better job than their two rookies.
- Overall seems to work better, difficulties arise when a caller won't let you go in order on the sheet.
- Some counties find resistance from the community who don't want to answer more questions, particularly medical and school personnel.
- Overall, seems to be the newer workers struggling with this, however there may be some people who do not have this capacity as one of their strengths.

2 Approaches

Watagua

- Revising original plan based on the training they are getting now.
- Hoping to have all staff trained by late Spring.
- Will have a blend where everyone does both types of cases.

Haywood

- Signed up for training, filled a supervisory vacancy, hope to implement by June.
- Will keep current teams but try to assign folks to one type of case or the other.

Cherokee

- Workers in training through May, then will start 100% of cases on 2 tracks.

Jackson

- Investigation and Case Planning are currently separate units and there is a dilemma about blending or keeping them separate.
- Start 2 tracks 100% on July 1.

Yancey

- Plan to have 1 worker for each type of case, and 1 worker who does both.
- Recently began assigning Assessment cases.
- Still have resistance to interviewing children in front of parents.
 - Wisdom from the 10 pilot counties is that this cannot be forced, let workers ease into it.

Macon

- Currently assigning Family Assessment, they were involved in System of Care so this fits with the philosophy they already had.
- All workers are doing Investigative and Assessment and will keep the case for its life.
 - Discussion – keeping cases for life and doing both types has been difficult if counties did not reduce the 215 caseload.
 - Some of the 10 pilot have gone back and really scrutinized their “stuck” cases.
 - They have also tried assigning new workers to assessment because they have no history of backlogged 215 cases.
 - This will be a topic when we meet as a group next month.

Union

- Have not started, will finish training mid-March.
- Will start with 4 of 11 workers and choose certain allegations such as improper discipline and environment injurious.

Polk

- Have not registered yet. Have 5 workers.

Cleveland

- 4 teams, 2 investigative, 2 case management.
- Implementing on 4/19 - Jumping in 100%
- Already reduced 215 cases by looking at all cases over 90 days, management pulls and reviews records monthly.
- Looking at whether or not cases would have been screened out under MRS.

(Tony mentioned that New Hanover is having their Work First worker do the assessment if the client already has an open work first case.)

Alexander

- Currently doing Assessments.
- Separating out 210 and 215.
- Had a Family Team meeting at DSS – SW, family, and supervisor were there. Was facilitated by a worker not involved with the case. Went well.

Henderson

- Registered for training.
- Currently reworking plan, no idea when implementation will occur.

Iredell

- Training everyone, pushing back implantation because want to roll out for everyone at once (hopefully by July).
- Want to be blended and have everyone to each kind of case, although may do like Caldwell and have 1 person that does high risk cases.
- Has a question about how doing both kinds of services affects standards and Child & Family Reviews. Concerned that doing both might lead to a lowering of standards.
- Have been using teams for 7-8 years.
- Would be interested to see a job description for blended workers.

Catawba

- Working on a redesign.
- Looking at putting Assessment and Investigative on teams together , with one person to do both.
- Plan to roll out to all staff at once.

General Discussion

- Comment was made about school personnel not liking assessments. Do not want to be an active part of an open case, despite continuing education of community partners. This county going to meet with the schools for the 4th time.
 - Tony shared that Wake Co. had a 'focus group' of 250 people, including the schools and courts. They invited anyone in the community to be a part of the planning for implementation.
 - State DSS trying to get on agenda of pre-meetings schools have for teachers before the start of the year.
- Franklin has a breakfast meeting.
- Some have used CCPT meetings.
 - The State will also be presenting at the Judges conference
 - Mental Health is harder to reach because of all the issues they have right now.
- Are more counties moving to multi task (3) or keeping 210/215 separate (5)? 4 are currently unsure.
- Funding for facilitators – Tony reported state is trying to secure some. Catawba codes 219Z, state will research codes that could be used.

Buncombe

(As they are one of the 10 pilots, they are in a different place relative to the 7 strategies.)

- TANF/Child Welfare staff sitting in on each other's staffing. Slow, but coming around.
- Barriers to collaboration include trying to break old rules, misconceptions of the other program.
 - Henderson has combined Work 1st and DSS plans so clients know there is no check if they are not participating in their plan

- DSS workers find it a challenge to learn the rules of work first.
- Sometimes hard to see benefits of collaboration, seems like a lot of extra meetings. (Work First workers have caseloads of 30+ so they cannot attend all the meetings.)
- Should be seen as a benefit for each worker.

Shared Parenting

Catawba

- Meetings scheduled, trainings for Foster Parents.

Macon

- Already doing.
 - Made suggestion to make SP a bigger part of MAPP, in other words sell it from the start.
 - They sell it from the first question they get about foster care. *"Foster care is a service provided to the **family**, not just the child."*

Cherokee

- Starting a new MAPP that includes the idea that Shared Parenting is non-negotiable.
 - Policy needs to address the times that Shared Parenting is not applicable because of safety issues.

Law Enforcement

(More of a group discussion that county by county.)

- Tony requested an email of Catawba, Cleveland, Buncombe's memorandum with law enforcement.
- Shared report from the 10 that more often their issues are with the DA's office than law enforcement, some of this group agreed.
- Problems
 - Magistrates not charging with the right charges.
 - Cops don't have training to investigate correctly.
- Some counties offered that when the prosecutor, SW, and law enforcement can be involved with the interview of the child at the advocacy center (observation) the result has been better prosecution. (The feeling is that the advocacy center keeps the DA accountable.)
- State trying to meet with DA's at their convention.
- Presenting MRS to DSS county attorneys at the meeting next week.

Future Meetings

- East 4/19, 5/19 in Wilson
- West 4/15 (will try to go with the 3rd Thursday)
- March meeting will be with all 52, location and final date TBA.
- Encourage bringing line staff to meetings.